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Work on dredging and restoring Butler Lake, needed for many years, will finally begin this fall.

The official kick-off was held on Monday with Libertyville Mayor Jeff Harger; U.S. Rep. Mark Kirk, R-10th, of Highland Park; and Roy Deda of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers-Chicago District, at the Crawford Warming House at Butler Lake.

Design, engineering approval and a \$700,000 grant from the Army Corps of Engineers facilitated by Kirk paved the way for the \$3.2 million project to begin.

"We got involved when we saw the rapid deterioration of the lake," said Kirk, who took notice of it in 2001. That winter, nearly all of the fish were killed when the lake froze solid because of its shallow depth.

The work is scheduled to be done in two phases.

Construction of a sediment dewatering facility and dredging makes up the first phase of the project. Cost estimates for this portion of the project are estimated at slightly over \$1.2 million, and the contract has been awarded to Matrix Environmental, Inc.

Kevin Bowens, village administrator, said the dewatering facility would be build first on the Lake County property located on the north side of Winchester and on the west side of Milwaukee, and then dredging will begin later this fall or early winter - weather permitting.

He said the silt, which has caused the lake to become shallow, will be dredged and hydraulically pumped through a pipe that will run north along Bull Creek. The sediment will settle in the basin and the water will return to the creek.

The drained material will be allowed to dry out for one year to 18 months and will then be spread as fertilizer

Bowens said Libertyville had granted an easement in November 1996 for an earthen levee to be built to protect North Libertyville Estates from flooding of the Des Plaines River through an intergovernmental agreement with the village, Lake County, Lake County Forest Preserve District and the Lake County Stormwater Management Commission. In exchange, mitigation at Butler Lake, located within the same Bull Creek Watershed, would be done.

He said the Army Corps was not party to the intergovernmental agreement, but designed and oversaw the construction of the levee.

"It has taken a long time, but we're here," said Bowens.

He said funding cuts to the Army Corps have delayed the project, and that Kirk's involvement was invaluable in getting the money allocated.

Federal responsibility is 65 percent, \$2.08 million. The Village of Libertyville is responsible for 35 percent, \$1.12 million.

Of that, \$550,800 will come from credits for lands, easements, rights-of-way, relocations and disposal from the levee easement granted in 1996. The remaining \$569,200 has been carried over in the village budget for the past five years.

"We have been planning for our share of it," said Bowens.

Ecosystem restoration, the second phase of the project is expected to begin Spring 2006. During this phase, the shoreline will be stabilized and a buffer of native prairie established.

Additionally, a feature called riffle will be created, which causes the water to ripple and inhibit the growth of surface algae.

"All good things come in time," said Dean Larson, Libertyville trustee and historian of the lake.

"Dr. Norma Munson and the conservation club at Libertyville High School, did a survey of the lake about 30 years ago," said Larson. "At that time, the deepest part of the lake was 20 feet deep and spring-fed. I hope the springs will come back."

The plan is to dredge 30 acres of the lake to the depth of eight feet.

The lake was last dredged in the late 1960s.

Larson said, "There had been talk at one time about turning the lake into a cranberry bog, or draining it to create a golf course. I'm glad neither of those things happened."

Kirk anticipated the restoration project will make Butler Lake a recreational destination within the county. He said canoeing, kayaking and fishing would be the largest uses of the lake.

"I stood on the boat ramp yesterday," he said. "Canoes and kayaks will have plenty of access."